

# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 21, 2011  
NR #11-29

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## Resolution Approved Supporting Re-Entry Task Force Policy Recommendations

**San Bernardino.** A Resolution in support of the Department of Public Health's Re-Entry Task Force Proposed Policy Recommendations, was approved by the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors on April 19, 2011. The Policy Recommendations address the needs of formerly incarcerated persons, and will be submitted to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

"This is a big step toward identifying and addressing the health issues posed by parolees returning to the County," said Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare, San Bernardino County Health Officer. "It's particularly important to ensure that these individuals receive proper treatment to protect the community from potential communicable disease threats."

The state releases approximately 9,000 parolees into San Bernardino County each year. Many of them have significant health problems compared to the general U.S. population. A 2003 Rand study found that California parolees experience a 4 times greater rate of active Tuberculosis, 9 to 10 times greater rate for Hepatitis C and 5 times higher rate of AIDS. In addition, the rate of mental illness is 1.5 to 5 times higher, and there is an increased incidence of substance abuse and chronic diseases.

There is an ongoing disparity in funding for re-entry and rehabilitation and the County is at risk for assuming more of the costs in the future. The Policy Recommendations urge CDCR to facilitate consistent communication with the parolee and the County Department of Public Health, for appropriate treatment and follow-up of re-entrants who have diagnoses that require a continuum of care.

Churches and other community organizations bear a significant burden in attempting to respond to these unmet needs, due to their limited funding and expertise to address the serious and extensive problems of parolees. In response to the concerns posed at the

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State level, by other counties, and community groups, the Department of Public Health formed a San Bernardino County Re-Entry Task Force to draft the Policy Recommendations.

Dr. Ohikhuare noted that “the Task Force has formed new partnerships and strengthened existing working relationships that will be instrumental in improving our ability to work together, and better serve the needs of re-entrants and the community.” Participants included staff from various county departments and community agencies, including: Arrowhead Regional Medical Center; Board of Supervisors, Fourth and Fifth Districts; Children and Family Services; City of San Bernardino; COPE; Department of Aging and Adult Services, Department of Behavioral Health, Department of Public Health, Inland Empire Concerned African American Churches; Office of Homeless Services; Probation; Public Defender; Regional Congregations and Neighborhood Organizations, Sheriff’s Department; State of California Parole Office; Transitional Assistance Department; and Veterans Affairs.

For more information about public health services, contact the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health at (800) 782-4264, or visit the website at <http://www.sbcounty.gov/dph/>.

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